

JOHN GOULD'S NOTES FOR JOHN GILBERT.

The names of John Gould and John Gilbert are so closely associated with Australia that new records of their work are still of interest. Through the kindness of Mrs. Charles Coxen and Mr. H. C. Coxen, relatives of John Gould, a small bound volume of manuscript containing the instructions written by the great ornithologist for his enthusiastic collector, John Gilbert, has been given an honoured place among the historical documents in the Queensland Museum.

In clear and elegant writing the ardent wishes of the pioneer naturalist are set out. Although the notes were never intended for publication, it has been thought desirable to print them in their original condition, with a few obvious slips revised. These notes were evidently for Gilbert's use on his second visit to Australia, and were written over eighty years ago. A special and pathetic interest is attached to them because of John Gilbert's tragic death in Queensland at the hands of aborigines during the Leichhardt expedition to Port Essington in 1845. That story is too well known to need repetition, and the collector's lonely grave in the far North will always be sacred to the naturalists of Queensland.

The bracketed numbers in the text refer to a few explanatory notes which are given at the close.

NEW SOUTH WALES.

“ Collect specimens of *all* kinds of kangaroos and other mammalia, with their crania; send, if possible, the nose, face, and the palms of the hands and feet of all kinds of the smaller animals in brine or spirits, and make notes of their colour, as also of the eyes with their dimensions.

“ Three kinds of wallaby run in the brushes of Illawarra, viz., *Halmaturus* [1], *ualabatus*, *H. Tithys* (the common pademellan, a red-necked kind), and a nearly allied species called ‘Pama’ by the natives. Of this latter, which is very like *Derbyanus*, I wish as many specimens and crania as convenient, and also fine specimens, and particularly crania, of the two former.

“ At Illawarra I also saw, but could not procure, a small mouse-like animal among the leaves on the hills. The *Halm. ruficollis* (Warroon of the natives) is also very abundant on the rise of the hills by the side of the bush road between Wollongong and Bongbong. This kangaroo, of which I want good specimens, and particularly a *skeleton of an adult male and crania of both sexes*, may be procured by paying a visit to Mr. Throsby, at Bongbong, who will send his Tommy or some other native out with you. Bongbong is near Berima and can be reached either by going in the mail cart from Sydney, or by walking over with native guides from Wollongong. The koala or monkey [2] is also common on this road, and in Throsby Park the grey magpie *Strepera*, which I want.

“ Both the menura and the tallegalla are abundant in some parts of the Illawarra district, but they are scarce near Wollongong. . . . The nidification of menura [3], being of the utmost importance, you must not fail to gain every information from the natives as to the structure and situation of the nest, number of eggs, &c., &c. Offer high rewards for the eggs, but you need not spend time in trying to shoot the birds. The bell bird, *Orthonyx*, satin and catbirds, Ganggang parrot, large green pigeon (*magnifica*) columba, Phasianella, all breed in these brushes, and of all of which I want the eggs.

“ When at Bongbong, the natives also told me of a large blue-grey kangaroo which they sometimes killed. I could never make out what it is unless it be *robustus*. Make enquiry.

“ In all districts get rock kangaroos, if possible, and kangaroo rats.

“ Be very particular in ascertaining if there is an emu inhabiting the brushes, of a small size and black. I saw the footsteps of an emu on the small island next Mosquito Island at the mouth of the Hunter, and from the character of the brush and the low swampy nature of the soil I should not be surprised if it prove to be the small species. The natives would probably throw some light on the subject. Baker's Island is close to Newcastle, on which lives a Mr. Baker (a gardener) and his sons; they would give you information.

“ The great *Macropus laniger* [4] is also found on the plains; in all probability it might be got by getting to any of the out stations behind Port Philip. I found it both in S. Australia, near the Murray, and on the extensive plains of the lower Namoi, near Gundermein; it is also to be found still nearer the colony, both at the Peel towards New England and within twenty miles from Brezi on the river Mokai, northward of Liverpool Plains, and which could only, I think, be got from Brown's station, eighteen miles lower down the Mokai. *Robustus*, *frænatus*, and *dorsalis* are also found at Brezi, but do not go purposely for these. The great walleroo could be procured by employing the Yarrundi natives (Coxen's). I found them on the hills in front of Mr. Coxen's house, and Natty pointed out a hill close to the cedar brush at the Liverpool Range where they are abundant. Should you visit the Upper Hunter district it would perhaps be well to spend a week in getting as many specimens of the walleroo as possible, always securing the services of Natty and Jemmy, my faithful companions. Mr. Coxen would doubtless lend you a horse and cart and send you and your traps to the range where you would take up your quarters under the very hills on which the animal is found. The rock kangaroo, of which I should like several specimens, is also abundant here. The brushes are not worth hunting for the birds.

“ You will also in this district procure the rat kangaroo [5] with the long white tip to its tail—not the common one found about Yarrundi—but if you call Natty's attention to the one we so often saw on all the low grassy hills immediately adjoining the range he will recollect. I, unfortunately, did not obtain it.

“ You will, of course, collect every species of *mammal* in all the districts you visit. Pray try to get a little mouse (somewhat larger than the common European one) with a short blunt head, and which Jemmy caught for me from a hole in the ground in the bush close to Mr. Coxen's garden gate at Yarrundi. There are six or eight opossums in this district, four of which are only found in the brushes. Be sure to get the large great brush opossum with short ear [6] found in the hollows of the trees.

“ Be sure to get the opossums from Illawarra and, indeed, from every district. Ascertain also if those of the plains are not distinct from those of the brushes; as I found to be the case at the Liverpool Plains.

PORT STEPHENS.

“ On the hills at the back of this place, and doubtless on the ranges at Moreton Bay, the beautiful *M. Parryi* is found, and probably *robustus* and other species. . . . Gain all possible information respecting the nidification of the *Cuculidae*. Ascertain, if possible, what species lays the olive-brown eggs [7], by searching for the eggs in the body.

“ Gain further information respecting the nidification and habits of *Centropus*, whether more than one species—the changes they undergo, and if the brown birds are the young, or if this style of colouring is sexual.

“ Make every enquiry about *Pedionomus*; it will most probably be found on the open sterile plains of the interior of W. Australia.

“ *Kangaroos from W. Australia*.—Gain every possible information respecting the group. Collect adult males and females, together with the young of every species, and, if practicable, ascertain the weight of each and the difference of the weight of the sexes. Procure also as many crania as possible, labelling each with the name of the species and the sex. Procure the wallaby from Garden and Rotnest Islands. Dissect as many females as you can and learn if the young are found in the uterus and pouch at the same time; state the size of the young in the pouch. Specimens and crania of *Gilbertii* [8] particularly wanted.

“ Attend to the seals.

“ For birds of Western Australia see the list; and of those marked with the greatest number of x's send as many as can be collected. Fine examples of the nests and eggs of all; and also duplicates of the eggs.

“ As many fish from every part not only of New Holland, but the Cape, St. Jago, &c.

“ Shells, as many as possible; see Mr. Cuming's directions.

“ Of plants, some ornamental shrubs and pieces of bark for drawings.

“ The beard of the *Pinna* from the Sound.

“ Send all the sponges and corallines possible.

“ Collect reptiles and insects.

“ See after a second emu in W. Australia.

“ Collect emus from every locality. Ascertain the sex and procure if possible adult birds.

“ Eggs of *Leipoa* and *Megapodius* in brine or new preservative.

“ Specimens and crania of all quadrupeds, great or small.”

NOTES.

1. The genus *Halmaturus* is now usually incorporated with *Macropus*, although, apart from size, the persistence of the premolar in the smaller wallabies forms a useful distinction from the kangaroos (*Macropus sensu stricto*). Some of the large fossil macropods, however, have a persistent premolar. *Halmaturus* “*Tithys*”—*Macropus thetidis*. The “pama” or parma wallaby was described by Waterhouse in 1846 as *M. parma*.

2. The unsuitable term “monkey” for the koala or native bear was subsequently dropped.

3. Although Gould described from Dr. Ludwig Becker’s notes the nest and habits of his *Menura victoriae*, no account of the nidification of the closely-allied New South Wales bird appeared in his books.

4. *Macropus* “*laniger*” is better known as *M. rufus*, the red kangaroo. *Onychogale frenata* is the bridled wallaby, one of the nail-tailed group.

5. *Bettongia lesueuri*.—It may be noted that Gould wrote of the rat kangaroo and the kangaroo rat, and the confusion exists to-day; but the former, meaning rat-like kangaroo, is obviously the better term.

6. “The great brush opossum” is *Trichosurus caninus*, typically found in our “scrubs” or rain-forest, whilst *T. vulpecula* is characteristic of the open forest.

7. As noted by Gould in his Handbook, I, p. 624, the bronze cuckoo, *Lamprocyx plagosus*, lays olive-brown eggs.

8. “Gilberti” evidently refers to *Potorous gilberti*, a rat kangaroo of Western Australia, named by Gould in 1841 in recognition of Gilbert’s work.

It is impossible to read through these notes without feeling a touch of that enthusiasm with which John Gould inspired his able collector. The records of these two men stand out in the literature of Australian Natural History, and the writer considers it a privilege to be able to give some publicity to the interesting notes in this little volume.

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